U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2004-179 -EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): ROW COC67992

PROJECT NAME: Bass Yellow Creek Pipeline and Plant

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado

T. 1 N., R.97 W.,
sec. 21, SE¼SE¼;
sec. 22, S½SW¼, SW¼SE¼;
sec. 28, NW¼SW¼, SW½NE¼, NE¼NW¼, N½NE¼;
sec. 29, S½SE¼;
sec. 31, lot 9, 10, N½SE¼;
sec. 32, N½SW, E½NE¼, NW¼NE¼.

T. 1 S., R.97 W.,
sec. 6, lot 9, 10, 11.

T. 1 N., R.98 W.,
sec. 36, lot 2, 3, 4.

T. 1 S., R. 98 W.,
sec. 1, lots 5, 6, 7, 8;
sec. 2, lot 6, 7, SE¼NW¼;
sec. 3, lot 5, 6, 7, 8.

APPLICANT: Dominion Gas Ventures LP

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional):

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Proposed Action: Dominion Gas proposes to build a buried natural gas line and plant for Bass Exploration, along a route jointly identified by Dominion and the BLM, as noted below. The line will include 47,000 ft. of 8 in. and 6,600 ft. of 6 in. pipe. A 3 inch waterline will be in the

same trench upstream of the plant site. This waterline will be used to recycle water for drilling purposes and will be stored in a tank at the plant. The plant will be 4.9 acres and will include an animine treatment plant, dew point plant, and a compressor station. The meter site will be a 100 ft by 100 ft site. They request a 75 ft construction width to revert to a permanent easement of 50ft. or 30ft where it parallels roads. They request a 30 year authorization. Project construction is estimated to take 45 to 60 days which would be initiated in November, 2004 with an anticipated completion date of late December, 2004.

A pre-application meeting was held on July 14, 2004. The line will cross the Exxon Mobil pipeline (COC067021) just before the tie-in at Piceance Creek. Part of the route passes through old chained areas. Approximately 1 mile of the route passes through Colorado Division of Wildlife property, which will be authorized by a separate application and approved by the State Wildlife Commission and the Fish and Wildlife Service. The route following County Road 20 (Yellow Creek), north of the gas plant was judged to be un-acceptable because of the additional pipeline length and resource disturbance.

The pipeline would be 10.15 miles. The total disturbed area would total 97.41 acres, part of which would be decreased after construction and reclamation.

No Action Alternative: In the no-action alternative, the pipeline and associated facilities would not be constructed; there would be no new disturbance.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD: The route originally proposed by the applicant involved cross country segments that appeared, upon initial review by the Bureau, to involve excessive surface disturbance, in part through potential habitat for threatened and endangered species of plants. As a result, a joint field examination was held by Bureau staff and applicant representatives to identify the most environmentally sound route acceptable to both parties. The Proposed Action analyzed below utilizes this jointly identified route.

NEED FOR THE ACTION: Bass Energy has drilled 2 wells and has plans for more. The plant would upgrade the natural gas transport and the pipeline would connect it to markets.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-49 thru 2-52

Decision Language: "To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values."

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: There are no special designation air sheds or non-attainment areas nearby that would be affected by the proposed action. During periods of low precipitation, air quality in the area of the proposed action is often diminished by dust caused by human disturbance.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would result in short term, local impacts to air quality during and after construction, due to dust being blown into the air. After adequate vegetation is reestablished, blowing dust should return to pre-construction levels.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No increase in dust will occur.

Mitigation: Require water spreading on the road surfaces to control fugitive dust and to help minimize short-term impacts.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed natural gas pipeline, the required reroute in section 2, Township 1 South, Range 97 West, and the gas plant have been inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level (Bott 2004, Compliance Dated 10/18/2004, Brogan and O'Brien 2004, Compliance Dated 8/31/2004) and all known cultural resources in the area have been avoided by the pipeline and its reroute.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: As currently proposed, including the reroute to avoid old growth piñon and juniper stands and all known cultural resources, the project will not impact any known cultural resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: The invasive alien cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is present throughout the project area primarily along county roads, aggressively colonizing disturbed non revegetated areas. The problem weed mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) is also present in the area, primarily scattered in drainages and slopes on the east side of the Yellow Creek/Piceance Creek divide.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action will create significant areas of earthen disturbance which, if they are not promptly revegetated, will provide safe sites for the establishment and proliferation of both cheatgrass and noxious weeds.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation of relatively few areas occupied by noxious weeds and cheatgrass.

Mitigation: Promptly recontour and revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed mix #3. The project applicant will be responsible for eradicating cheatgrass and noxious and problem weeds should they occur as a result of the proposed action. The applicant will use materials and methods authorized in advance by the White River Field Manager.

MIGRATORY BIRDS

Affected Environment: An array of migratory birds fulfill nesting functions in the project area's, basin big sagebrush/greasewood, Wyoming big sagebrush, pinyon-juniper woodland, and chained pinyon-juniper/mixed shrub communities from late May through early August. Species associated with these shrubland and woodland communities are typical and widely represented in the Resource Area and region. Those bird populations identified as having higher conservation interest (i.e., Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Partners in Flight program) include Brewer's sparrow, green-tailed towhee, and Virginia's warbler in the shrubland types and gray flycatcher, pinyon jay, juniper titmouse, black-throated gray warbler, and violet-green swallow in the woodlands. These birds, too, are well distributed at appropriate densities in this Resource Area's extensive like-habitats.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Project construction would be initiated in November, 2004 with an anticipated completion date of late December, 2004. This project, as scheduled, would be completed prior to the earliest nesting activity of migratory birds. Even with unanticipated project delays, this project would have no reasonable potential to disrupt the nesting activities of migratory birds.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to disrupt the breeding activities of migratory birds. Alternative actions considered but not carried forward would have similar or more substantive consequences as those finalized under the proposed action.

Mitigation: None.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE ANIMAL SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: There are no animals listed, proposed, or candidate to the Endangered Species Act, or those BLM considers sensitive, that are known to inhabit or derive important benefit from the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no conceivable influence on special status animals or associated habitats.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: The no action alternative would have no conceivable influence on special status animals or associated habitats.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: The proposed and no-action alternatives would have no influence on special status species or associated habitats and, as such, would have no influence on applicable land health standards.

THREATENED, ENDANGERED, AND SENSITIVE PLANT SPECIES (includes a finding on Standard 4)

Affected Environment: All of the rare plants that occur within the Piceance Basin depend on relatively barren shale habitats of the Green River Formation. Of particular interest is an exposure of the Thirteen Mile Creek Tongue of the Green River Formation. This outcropping parallels the valley slopes of Yellow Creek and Piceance Creek and their tributaries. Two threatened plants, the Dudley Bluffs Bladderpod (*Lesquerella congesta*) and the Piceance twinpod (Physaria *obcordata*), are known to occur on this formation. Documented occurrences of the Dudley Bluffs bladderpod are located in Yellow Creek above it's confluence with Duck Creek. Documented occurrences of the Dudley Bluffs bladderpod are located approximately 1200 feet from the project site. A pedestrian survey was conducted by BLM staff during the on-site.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: During the pedestrian survey which was conducted by BLM staff, no Threatened, Endangered, and sensitive plant species were found.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None

Mitigation: None

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for Threatened & Endangered species: There is no reasonable likelihood that the proposed action or no action alternative would have an influence on the condition or function of Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive plant species. Thus there would be no effect on achieving the land health standard.

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

WATER QUALITY, SURFACE AND GROUND (includes a finding on Standard 5)

Affected Environment: The proposed action is in the Yellow Creek and Piceance Creek drainages. Both of these drainages are tributary to the White River. A review of the Colorado's 1989 Nonpoint Source Assessment Report (plus updates), the 305(b) report, the 303(d) list and the Unified Watershed Assessment was done to see if any water quality concerns have been identified.

The Yellow Creek is in segment 13b and has been designated by the State as "Use Protected". The State further classified this stream segment as Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 2, and Agriculture. The state has further defined water quality parameters with table values. These standards reflect the ambient water quality and define maximum allowable concentrations for the various water quality parameters. The anti-degradation rule does not apply to segments that are considered to be use protected. For these drainages, only the parameters listed in the table apply.

The Piceance Creek is in segment 15. The anti-degradation rule applies to this segment meaning no further water quality degradation is allowable that would interfere with or become harmful to the designated uses. This reach's designated beneficial uses are: Warm Aquatic Life 2, Recreation 1b, and Agriculture. For this reach, minimum standards for four parameters have been listed. These parameters are: dissolved oxygen = 5.0 mg/l, pH = 6.5 - 9.0 and Fecal Coliform = 2000/100ml and 630/100 ml E. coli. In addition standards for inorganic and metals have also been listed and can be found in the table of stream classifications and water quality standards.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Annual runoff is dynamic and dependent on some aspects we control, such as the amount of vegetation retained for watershed protection and vegetation density. Depleting this vegetation cover needed to protect watersheds from raindrop impact and runoff could cause long-term erosion and water quality problems for

Piceance Creek and on downstream. BMPs are needed to re-establish a protective vegetative cover and to collect sediment during runoff events.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts from the no-action alternative are not anticipated.

Mitigation: Apply the following Conditions of Approval, (BMPs) listed in Appendix B, in the White River ROD/RMP to help minimize surface disturbing impacts.

After reclamation seeding has been finalized, any woody material from trees cleared from the pipeline Right-Of-Way (ROW), will be evenly redistributed over that portion of the ROW from which the trees were originally removed. This is required in order to deter subsequent vehicle use of the pipeline ROW, and to minimize development of new roads and trails, consistent with White River Field Office Resource Management Plan decisions, as noted in the Record-of-Decision, page 2-29

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for water quality: The proposed action will have no effect on the watershed's ability to meet these water quality standards.

WETLANDS AND RIPARIAN ZONES (includes a finding on Standard 2)

Affected Environment: The proposed action is generally separated from the nearest riparian and wetland habitats associated with Yellow Creek by a minimum of 1100 feet. In two isolated instances, small pipeline segments (about 200' each) within 200' of wetland habitats are effectively isolated from these State-owned properties by Rio Blanco County Road 20.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Temporary (i.e., pre-reclamation) and small-scale sediment movement from BLM-administered lands would have no realistic potential to influence the condition or function of wetland and riparian communities associated with Yellow Creek.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to influence wetland and riparian habitats associated with Yellow Creek.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for riparian systems: The proposed and no-action alternatives would have no reasonable likelihood of influencing wetland or riparian communities and, as such, would have no bearing on applicable land health standards.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, prime and unique farmlands, Wilderness, or Wild and Scenic Rivers exist within the area affected by the proposed action. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The soils have been mapped in an order III soil survey by Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) which is available for review at the field office. Refer to the table below for the type of soils affected by the proposed action.

Soil Number	Soil Name	Slope	Ecological site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Depth to Bedrock
6	Barcus channery loamy sand	2-8%	Foothills Swale	<2	Slow	Moderate	>60
17	Chipeta silty clay loam eroded		Clayey Saltdesert	4-16	Rapid	Very high	10-20
33	Forelle loam	3-8%	Rolling Loam	<2	Medium	Moderate	>60
36	Glendive fine sandy loam		Foothills Swale	2-4	Slow	Slight	>60
41	Havre loam	0-4%	Foothill Swale	<4	Medium	Slight	>60
64	Piceance fine sandy loam	5-15%	Rolling Loam	<2	Medium	Moderate to high	20-40
70	Redcreek-Rentsac complex	5-30%	PJ woodlands/PJ woodlands	<2	Very high	Moderate to high	10-20
73	Rentsac channery loam	5-50%	Pinyon-Juniper woodlands	<2	Rapid	Moderate to very high	10-20
91	Torriorthents-Rock Outcrop complex	15-90%	Stoney Foothills		Rapid	Very high	10-20

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: General impacts associated with the proposed action include but are not limited to, loss of topsoil, soil compaction and possible increase in sediment loads to the White River. The primary surface-disturbing impact would be a

potential increase in sediment transport from runoff events after the protective vegetative cover has been removed. BMPs used to slow runoff, trap sediment and prepare reclaimed areas for seeding would help reduce soil loss. With the implementation of BMPs, impacts are expected to be short in duration; during the construction phase and for a short time after construction until successful reclamation is achieved.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: Impacts are not anticipated from not permitting the proposed action.

Mitigation: Use native seed mix # 3 for the range site identified. In addition, the following COAs from Appendix B, White River ROD/RMP should be applied.

Water bars or dikes shall be constructed on all of the rights-of-way, and across the full width of the disturbed area, as directed by the authorized officer.

When erosion is anticipated, sediment barriers shall be constructed to slow runoff, allow deposition of sediment, and prevent it from leaving the site. In addition, straining or filtration mechanisms may also help to remove sediment from runoff if deemed suitable by the AO.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: The proposed action will have no effect on the soils' ability to meet the land health standard.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Vegetation on the pipeline route is primarily juniper woodland and chained juniper woodland with a diverse understory of grasses and shrubs. These ecological sites are in early and mid seral stages.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There will be a net disturbance of about 100 acres as a result of project implementation. If this disturbance is promptly revegetated as stated in mitigation, there will be no significant negative impact to the affected plant communities.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: Promptly recontour and revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed mix #3. Seeding rates are PLS (Pure Live Seed) and apply to drill seeding. For broadcast application double seeding rate and then harrow to insure seed coverage. The project applicant will be responsible for eradicating cheatgrass and noxious and problem weeds should they occur as a result of the proposed action. The applicant will use materials and methods authorized in advance by the White River Field Manager.

Native Seed Mix # 3 lbs/PLS

Native Seed Mix # 3 lbs/PLS		
Western wheatgrass (Rosanna)	2*	Gravelly 10"-14",
Bluebunch wheatgrass (Secar, Whitmar)	2*	Pinyon/Juniper
Thickspike wheatgrass (Critana)	2*	Woodland, Stony
Indian ricegrass (Rimrock)	1*	Foothills, 147
Fourwing saltbush (Wytana)	1*	(Mountain
Utah sweetvetch	.5*	Mahogany)

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial)*:* Vegetation in the project area currently meets the Standard and will continue to meet the Standard following project construction if the stated mitigation is applied.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: Adjacent portions of Yellow Creek, which hosts an invertebrate-based aquatic system, is generally separated from the proposed action by a minimum of 1100 feet. In two isolated instances, small pipeline segments (about 200' each) lie within 500' of this channel, but are effectively isolated from these State-owned properties by Rio Blanco County Road 20.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Small amounts of fugitive sediments temporarily originating from the pipeline corridor (prior to effective reclamation) would have no reasonable likelihood of affecting channel function, water quality, or aquatic habitat conditions for invertebrate species in Yellow Creek.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to influence aquatic habitats associated with Yellow Creek.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): The proposed and no-action alternatives would have no reasonable likelihood of influencing channel function, water quality, or aquatic habitats associated with Yellow Creek and, as such, would have no bearing on applicable land health standards.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed action is largely encompassed by mule deer severe winter range, which is considered critical habitat in Game Management Unit 22. These upland ranges are occupied primarily from October through early May, but their most important function is realized during the late winter period of January through April. Critical habitat is a designation conveyed to seasonal habitats that are most limited in supply or are of inordinate

value within a given big game herd area--the loss or deterioration of which would adversely affect the species.

Woody forage for winter deer use is concentrated on off-road pipeline segments (about 4000 feet of Wyoming big sagebrush west of Yellow Creek and above Piceance Creek, and 9000 feet of serviceberry/bitterbrush/big sagebrush in the pinyon-juniper chainings). Herbaceous forage associated with these cross-country corridors, due much to their separation from established vehicle routes, receive proportionately higher rates of use than forage available on roadside corridors in the late fall and early spring months. Woody forage along established roadways, too, generally has limited utility for deer use. The proposed compressor facility is situated alongside a major county road in a draw mouth composed primarily of greasewood and basin big sagebrush. Forage values associated with this site are confined to early emerging herbaceous growth.

Road density in the project area approximates the objective level of 1.5 miles per square mile established for big game critical habitats in the White River RMP. The proposed action calls for about 16,000 feet of off-road right-of-way preparation on relatively level basin or ridgeline crest terrain.

The proposed pipeline route traverses about 2 miles of woodlands that could support woodland raptor nest activity (primarily sharp-shinned, Cooper's, and red-tailed hawk), although in this Field Office's experience pinyon and juniper trees in close proximity to existing roadbeds and right-of-ways and along ridgeline positions (i.e., entire project length) are rarely selected by raptors as nest substrate. Woodlands within 600 feet of the right-of-way were surveyed by consultants for evidence of current or past raptor nesting activity in the summer and fall of 2004. No evidence of raptor nest activity was found. Other small mammals and birds using this area are typical and widely distributed in extensive like habitats across the Resource Area and northwest Colorado; there are no narrowly endemic or highly specialized species known to inhabit those lands potentially influenced by this action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Corridor clearing would result in the shorter term and highly dispersed loss (10-15 years) of about 15 acres of woody forage. This level of forage reduction would have no effective influence on overall forage availability. Comparable abundance and quality of herbaceous forages would be available on the corridor within 1 year of project completion.

Big game impacts associated with road density and use (i.e., behavioral avoidance and habitat disuse; increased energetic demands) received prominent address in the White River ROD/RMP. Although this project entails no new intentional access, it is likely that cleared 50-foot swaths through mixed sagebrush/woodland and chained pinyon-juniper habitats would attract and sustain off-road vehicle use and expand the unimproved road network on deer severe winter ranges. The potential addition of 16,000 feet of two-track trails on these deer critical habitats would increase road density to approximately 1.7 miles per square mile and add cumulatively to the imminent road network attending further natural gas development. It is recommended that large woody debris cleared from the right-of-way be evenly redistributed to deter subsequent vehicle use.

Short term impacts associated with the construction of the compressor station and pipeline would be locally strong, likely affecting several hundred feet around the perimeter of any ongoing activity. It is estimated that at any given time big game would be temporarily displaced from 150 to 200 acres. During the mild late fall and early winter months, short term (i.e., 2 weeks or less progressively along the pipeline, static 2 months for compressor station) displacement and disuse of forage resources would be considered minor. In the long term, low levels of human activity associated with plant operation (adjacent to major county road) would have little discernible influence on former deer distribution or the utility of surrounding winter ranges.

Woodland clearing along existing roads and pipeline corridors would involve relatively narrow margins of woodland stands. Expanding the width of these previously cleared corridors by 30-50 feet (total of about 10 woodland acres) would have no substantive affect on landscape composition or character for nongame bird or mammal use. Proposed reclamation practices, including the use of native seed and redistribution of large woody debris on cross-country segments, would retain the short term utility of cleared right-of-way for small mammal use and abbreviate the time required to reestablish native shrub growth. Woody debris would aid in diversifying ungulate grazing use intensity and moisture regimes along the corridor and provide effective cover patches where rodent seed caching behavior, an important mechanism for deciduous browse germination, could take place.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to influence resident wildlife populations or associated habitats. Although the proposed development would not be constructed as presented, it is likely that an alternate pipeline alignment and site would be proposed. It is impossible to contrast impacts associated with alternate sites. Many features of project design that tend to mitigate the overall influence of the project on affected resources (e.g., extensive paralleling of existing corridors, no involvement of occupied or higher potential raptor habitat) may not be available under different alternatives.

Mitigation--To effectively deter subsequent vehicle use of pipeline corridor segments along ridgelines between RBC 83 and RBC 5 (Piceance Creek), between RBC 83 and RBC 20 (Yellow Creek), and the southerly off-road extension in T1S R98W section 2, it is recommended that, after appropriate reclamation, woody material cleared from the right-of-way be evenly redistributed along that portion of the right-of-way where this material was originally removed (i.e., chainings and woodlands). In those instances where the pipeline intersects the existing 2-track east of RBC 83 (which ends near the north-south centerline of section 21), continued public access should be maintained.

In the interest of reducing extraneous energy demands on deer during the late winter/early spring recovery and gestation period, it is recommended that pipeline construction operations be scheduled outside the late winter and early spring period (January-mid April). In the event of project delays, right-of-way preparation and/or pipeline installation may be deferred for up to 60-days between the period between January 1 and April 30 in the case of severe winter weather conditions (e.g., heavy persistent snow packs, poor animal condition, extreme cold).

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The landscapes associated with the proposed action currently meet the land health standards for terrestrial wildlife communities. Right-of-way clearing associated with the proposed action would remove a modest amount of woodland cover (about 10 acres) in the long term, though the bulk of this clearing would occur adjacent to existing pipeline corridors and roads—localized situations where woodland utility for wildlife is presently compromised. Cross-country shrubland clearing (about 15 acres) is generally confined to the pinyon-juniper chainings on the ridgeline between RBC 20 and 83 and about 2 acres of Wyoming big sagebrush ridgeline above Piceance Creek. This relatively short-lived reduction in woody deciduous and sagebrush forage and cover source is discountable relative to the type's extensive local availability. Subsequent reclamation of these disturbed areas with native species would be consistent with continued meeting of the land health standards for terrestrial game and nongame wildlife populations.

Vehicle use and road proliferation that would likely attend right-of-way development in cross country situations (see text above) would aggravate road-related effects on mule deer critical severe winter range habitats (e.g., elevated energy demands and habitat disuse). Failing to effectively deter subsequent vehicle use along cross-country portions of the right-of-way, as provided for in proposed mitigation, would reduce the present utility of critical big game severe winter ranges in the long term. This effect would represent an avoidable landscape-scale modification that is inconsistent with maintaining the land health standard for animals (e.g., maintaining animal density in balance with habitat/landscape potential and exhibiting resilience to human activities).

The no-action alternative would have no influence on the continued meeting of the land health standard for animals.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation			X
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management		X	
Forest Management			X
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Paleontology			X
Rangeland Management			X
Realty Authorizations			X
Recreation			X
Socio-Economics		X	

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses			X

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: Rio Blanco County Roads 20 and 83 in addition to BLM roads 1128 and 1145 will be affected by the proposed action. The pipeline coincides with areas that are open seasonally to cross country travel and where travel is limited to existing routes.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: An increase in traffic could be expected while construction takes place. BLM road 1128 may be closed at times during construction as pipeline parallels a portion of its length.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: Forest vegetation on the pipeline route is primarily juniper woodland and chained juniper woodland with a diverse understory of grasses and shrubs. These ecological sites are in early and mid seral stages. There is some use of the chaining slash for firewood and fenceposts by locals. Regeneration in the area is also used heavily for Christmas trees.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Very few trees would need to be removed along the pipeline route. The stipulation for dozing the trees off the right of way and following reclamation dragging the trees back onto the pipeline would serve to decreas vehicle use of the pipeline and stabilize soils. The native pinyon/juniper woodland would over time invade the right of way and mature into a climax stand.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no impacts.

Mitigation: All trees are to be dozed off the right-of-way, with the root ball. Following seeding these trees are to be scattered over the right-of-way to deter vehicle use.

PALEONTOLOGY

Affected Environment: The proposed pipeline is in an area mapped as the Uinta Formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM has classified as a Condition I formation meaning it is known to produce scientifically important fossil resources. The proposed pipeline, and the

required reroute in T 1 S, R 97 W, Section 2 have been examined for fossil resources (Bilbey and Hall 2004a, 2004b) with no fossils observed on the surface.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: it is considered likely that should it become necessary to excavate into the underlying bedrock formation that scientifically important fossil resources could be disturbed by the excavations.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to fossil resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. All excavations into the underlying bedrock formations required to adequately bury the pipeline shall be monitored by an approved paleontologist.

2. If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: On the west side of Yellow Creek the proposed pipeline occurs in the Barcus-Pinto Unit of the Yellow Creek allotment (06030). This unit is grazed by 350 pairs in the spring and fall on a yearly basis as part of Burke brothers cattle operation.. That part of the pipeline east of Yellow Creek is within the Square S allotment (06027). This allotment is used by the Mantle Ranch and Boone Vaughn cattle operations with 750 cows in the spring from May 1- May 30 and from late November through January in alternate years. The proposed pipeline intersects the east Yellow Creek allotment boundary fence in the SWNE Sec 2, T 1S R98 W. It then intersects the west Square S allotment boundary fence along RBC RD 20 at the NW corner of the NESE Sec 2 T 1S R 98W. It then intersects the Square S pasture boundary fence in the SWSE Sec 31 T 1N R 97W. It then intersects the east Square S allotment boundary fence along RBC Rd 5 in the SWSE Sec 20 T 1N R 97W. *The pipeline also intersects the west waterline from the Square S well in NWNE Sec 20 T 1N R 97W*.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: If the proposed mitigation is adhered to, there will be no negative impact as a result of the proposed action.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: The integrity of the east Yellow Creek and west Square S allotment boundary fences are to be maintained at all times. That is, if the fence is cut and down it will not be unattended.

Any gates constructed will be built to BLM specifications (i.e., with an H brace on either side).

The pasture boundary fence may be left down for no more than a day. Prior to cutting the described fences which the pipeline intersects, an H brace which meets BLM specifications will be constructed on either side of the pipeline right of way so that the fence can be properly stretched and tied off to maintain its tension. (Posts to be installed in the ground are to be a *minimum* of 5 inches in diameter. The horizontal brace shall be a *minimum* of 4 inches in diameter and a *minimum* of 6 feet 6 inches in length). Between the H braces the wire will be stretched tightly and a wood post or steel post driven every 16 feet.

The applicant will notify the Field Manager prior to the time when pipeline construction intersects these fences so that BLM can monitor the fence crossings.

After the gas pipeline is installed and backfilled, Bass/Dominion will have to replace the waterline from the well to the fence line so that it is in functioning condition.

REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: The proposed pipeline and plant crosses both Bureau of Land Management and Colorado Division of Wildlife lands. The meter station and east terminus of the pipeline crosses an existing right-of-way. The route crosses two Rio Blanco County roads.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: A right-of-way would be required for this action. This authorization has been serialized as COC67992.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: If the action is not authorized, there would be no impact.

Mitigation: Colorado One Call procedure shall be activated before any potential disturbance.

Contractors must contact existing right-of-way holders to avoid any impacts.

Applicant must obtain appropriate authorization from the Colorado Division of Wildlife for that portion of the pipeline crossing their lands. Authorization to proceed shall be issued as deemed appropriate by the authorizing officer.

RECREATION

Affected Environment: The proposed action occurs within the White River Extensive Recreation Management Area (ERMA). BLM custodially manages the ERMA to provide for unstructured recreation activities such as hunting, dispersed camping, hiking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing and off-highway vehicle use.

The project areas and the surrounding Yellow Creek area has been delineated a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM). SPM recreation setting

is typically characterized by a natural appearing environment with few administrative controls, low interaction between users but evidence of other users may be present. SPM recreation experience is characterized by a high probability of isolation from the sights and sounds of humans that offers an environment that offers challenge and risk.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The public will directly lose approximately 5 acres of dispersed recreation potential following construction of plant. The public will most likely not recreate in the vicinity of these facilities and will be dispersed elsewhere. If action coincides with hunting seasons (September through November) it will most likely disrupt the experience sought by those recreationists.

With the introduction of new well pads and roads, an increase of traffic could be expected increasing the likihood of human interactions, the sights and sounds associated with the human environment and a less naturally appearing environment.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No loss of dispersed recreation potential and no impact to hunting recreationists.

Mitigation: None.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed actions are located within a VRM class III area. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action for the buried pipeline would not visible to a casual observer traveling along any of the existing routes in the area except for the required pipeline markers on right-of-ways adjacent to some roads. The proposed action for the gas plant would be located in a valley adjacent to RBC 20 road and visible only by a casual observer traveling on this route. A casual observer traveling on this county road would pass adjacent and close to the gas plant, and would be able to view the gas plant for a short period of time. By painting all facilities Desert Brown, the gas plant from a distance would resemble, in color and form, the soils from the bottom of the drainage and most of the sparsely vegetated shale hillsides in the immediate area. The level of change to the characteristic landscape would be moderate and the standards of the VRM III classification would be retained.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no additional environmental consequences.

Mitigation: Paint all facilities Desert Brown (10YR 6/3).

WILD HORSES

Affected Environment: The pipeline west of the proposed plant is located within the Piceance-East Douglas Herd Management Area (HMA), in an area relied upon as winter range for a resident population of wild horses. Horses move into the stands of pinyon/juniper for protection during inclement weather, and graze the range in proximity to the pinyon/juniper stands, predominantly during the winter and early spring months.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: An unknown number of wild horse bands may be temporarily displaced during construction of the road and pipeline. The displacement is not expected to be permanent

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: None

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: The cumulative impacts of pipeline construction are addressed in the White River RMP/EIS. Those anticipated from this action have been minimized by following alongside of existing roads to the extent possible, limiting additional disturbances.

REFERENCES CITED

Bilbey, Sue Ann and Evan Hall

2004a Paleontological Field Survey Report Dominion Gas Yellow Creek Pipeline: Sections 21, 22, 28, 29 and 32, Township 1 North, Range 97 West, Section 36, Township 1 North, Range 98 West, Section 1 Township 1 South, Range 97 West, Sections 1, 2 and 3, Townwhip 1 South, Range 98 West, Bureau of Land Management Lands and Colorado Division of Wildlife Lands, Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Uinta Paleontological Associates, Inc., Vernal, Utah.

2004b Paleontological Field Survey Report Dominion Gas Yellow Creek Pipeline – Reroute, Sections 17, 20, 21, 22, 29, 31 & 32, Township 1 North, Range 97 West, Section 36, Township 1 North, Range 98 West, Section 6, Township 1 South, Range 97 West, Sections 1, 2, and 3, Township 1 South, Range 98 Wet, Bureau of Land Management Lands and Colorado Division of Wildlife Lands Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Uinta Paleontological Associates, Inc., Vernal, Utah.

Bott, Tracey

2004 Dominion Gas Ventures, LLC: Proposed Yellow Creek Pipeline Re-route in Rio Blanco County. Metcalf Archaeological Consultants Inc., Eagle, Colorado.

Brogan, John M. and Patrick K. O'Brien

2004 Dominion Gas Ventures, LLC: Class III Cultural Resource Inventory of the Proposed Yellow Creek Pipeline, Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Eagle, Colorado.

Tweto, Ogden
1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED: None

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Carol Hollowed	P & EC	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	NRS	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	NRS	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Bo Brown	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Carol Hollowed	P & EC	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	ORP	Wilderness
Carol Hollowed	P & EC	Soils
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Vegetation
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	ORP	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	NRS	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Management
Linda L Jones	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	ORP	Recreation
Keith Whitaker	NRS	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	NRS	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2004-179-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the proposed action, following the route identified in Exhibit A to the proposed grant, subject to stipulations which incorporate the mitigation measures listed below. The grant will be for a term of thirty years will be renewable, and fair market rental will be required. The right-of-way width will be 50 feet.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. All trees are to be dozed off the right-of-way, with the root ball.

2. To effectively deter subsequent vehicle use of pipeline corridor segments along ridgelines between RBC 83 and RBC 5 (Piceance Creek), between RBC 83 and RBC 20 (Yellow Creek), and the southerly off-road extension in T1S R98W section 2, that after appropriate reclamation, woody material cleared from the right-of-way be evenly redistributed along that portion of the right-of-way where this material was originally removed (i.e., chainings and woodlands). In those instances where the pipeline intersects the existing 2-track east of RBC 83 (which ends near the north-south centerline of section 21), continued public access should be maintained.

3. In the interest of reducing extraneous energy demands on deer during the late winter/early spring recovery and gestation period, pipeline construction operations be scheduled outside the late winter and early spring period (January-mid April). In the event of project delays, right-of-way preparation and/or pipeline installation may be deferred for up to 60-days between the period between January 1 and April 30 in the case of severe winter weather conditions (e.g., heavy persistent snow packs, poor animal condition, extreme cold).

4. Water spreading on the road surfaces to control fugitive dust and to help minimize short-term impacts will be required.

5. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are

uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

6. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

7. The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

8. Water bars or dikes shall be constructed on all of the rights-of-way, and across the full width of the disturbed area, as directed by the authorized officer.

9. When erosion is anticipated, sediment barriers shall be constructed to slow runoff, allow deposition of sediment, and prevent it from leaving the site. In addition, straining or filtration mechanisms may also help to remove sediment from runoff if deemed suitable by the AO.

10. Promptly recontour and revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed mix #3. Seeding rates are PLS (Pure Live Seed) and apply to drill seeding. For broadcast application double seeding rate and then harrow to insure seed coverage. The project applicant will be responsible for eradicating cheatgrass and noxious and problem weeds should they occur as a result of the proposed action. The applicant will use materials and methods authorized in advance by the White River Field Manager.

Native Seed Mix # 3 lbs/PLS		
Western wheatgrass (Rosanna)	2	Gravelly 10"-14",
Bluebunch wheatgrass (Secar)	2	Pinyon/Juniper
Thickspike wheatgrass (Critana)	2	Woodland, Stony

Native Seed Mix # 3 lbs/PLS		
Indian ricegrass (Rimrock)	1	Foothills, 147
Fourwing saltbush (Wytana)	1	(Mountain
Utah sweetvetch	.5	Mahogany)

11. All excavations into the underlying bedrock formations required to adequately bury the pipeline shall be monitored by an approved paleontologist.

12. If paleontological materials (fossils) are uncovered during project activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities that might further disturb such materials, and contact the authorized officer (AO). The operator and the authorized officer will consult and determine the best option for avoiding or mitigating paleontological site damage.

13. The integrity of the east Yellow Creek and west Square S allotment boundary fences are to be maintained at all times. That is, if the fence is cut and down it will not be unattended.

14. Any gates constructed will be built to BLM specifications (i.e., with an H brace on either side).

15. The pasture boundary fence may be left down for no more than a day. Prior to cutting the described fences which the pipeline intersects, an H brace which meets BLM specifications will be constructed on either side of the pipeline right of way so that the fence can be properly stretched and tied off to maintain its tension. (Posts to be installed in the ground are to be a *minimum* of 5 inches in diameter. The horizontal brace shall be a *minimum* of 4 inches in diameter and a *minimum* of 6 feet 6 inches in length). Between the H braces the wire will be stretched tightly and a wood post or steel post driven every 16 feet.

16. The applicant will notify the Field Manager prior to the time when pipeline construction intersects these fences so that BLM can monitor the fence crossings.

17. After the gas pipeline is installed and backfilled, Bass/Dominion will have to replace the waterline from the well to the fence line so that it is in functioning condition.

18. Colorado One Call procedure shall be activated before any potential disturbance.

19. Contractors must contact existing right-of-way holders to avoid any impacts.

20. Applicant must obtain appropriate authorization from the Colorado Division of Wildlife for that portion of the pipeline crossing their lands. Authorization to proceed shall be issued as deemed appropriate by the authorizing officer.

21. Paint all above ground facilities Desert Brown (10YR 6/3).

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Construction and reclamation will be monitored as the project progresses. Revegetation will be monitored annually for at least two growing seasons.

NAME OF PREPARER: Linda Jones

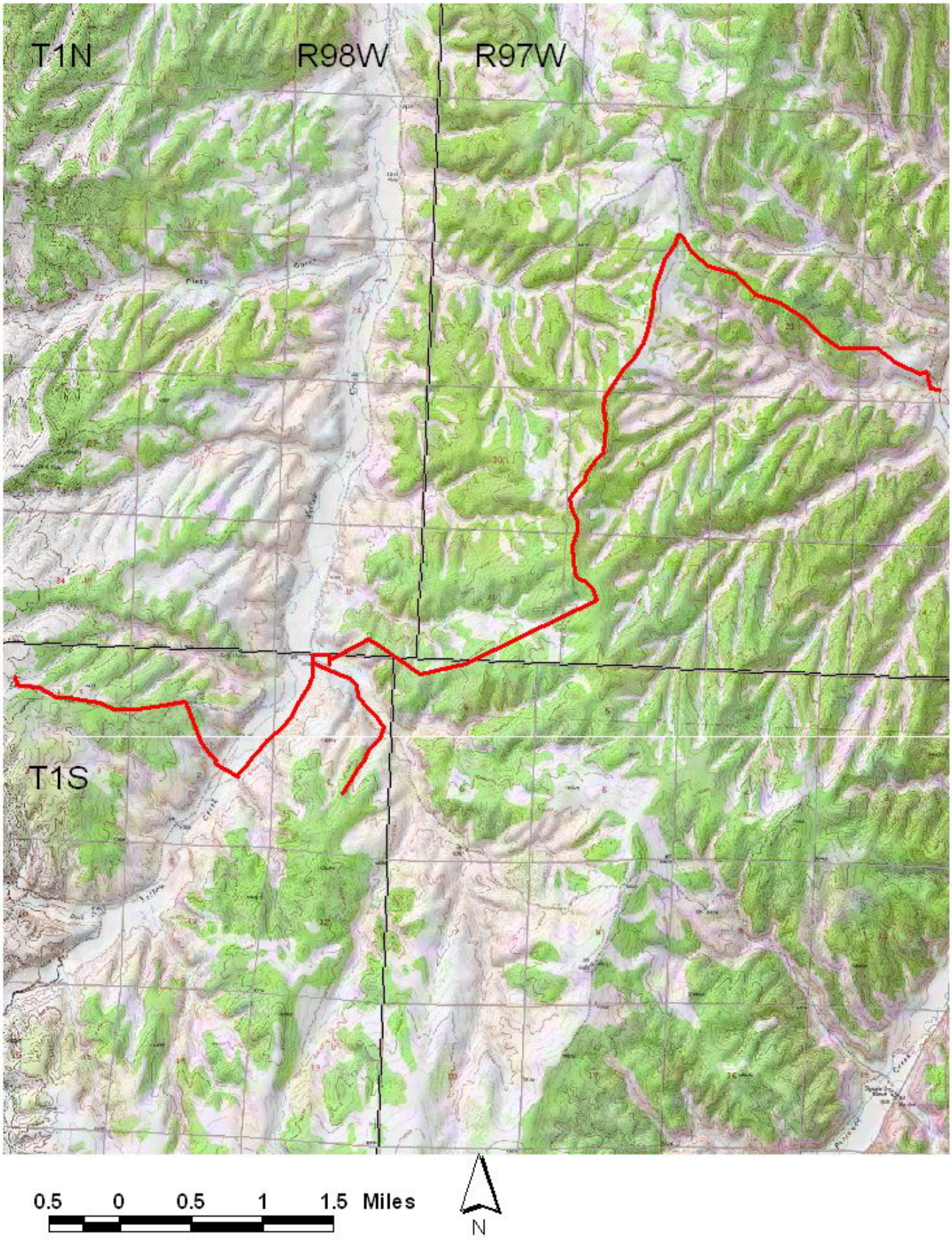
NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Carol Hollowed

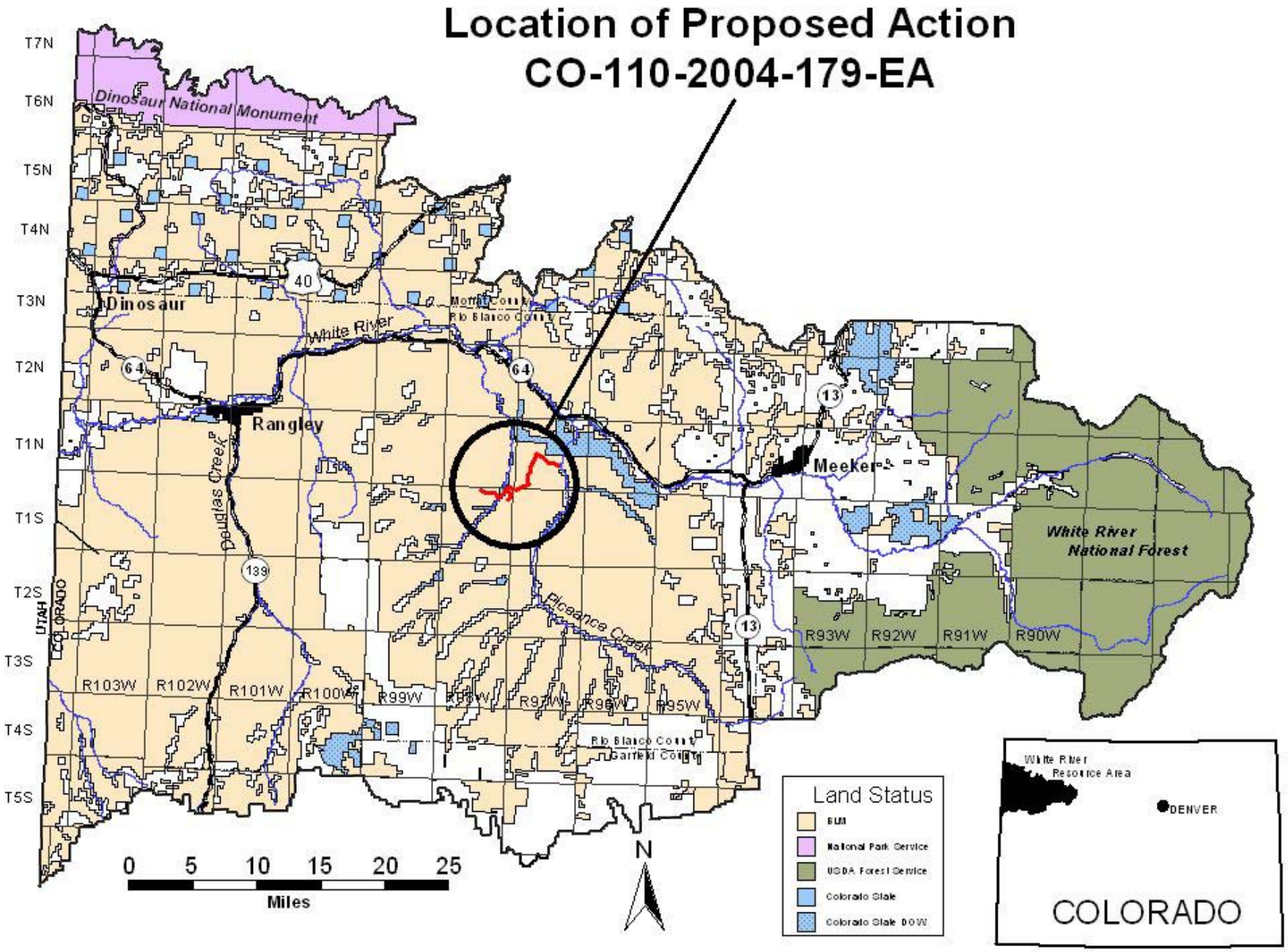
SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: _____
Acting Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 11/8/04

ATTACHMENTS: Exhibit A
Location map of the proposed action

Exhibit A




Location of Proposed Action
CO-110-2004-179-EA
T7N
T6N
T5N
T4N
T3N
T2N
T1N
T1S
T2S
T3S
T4S
T5S
Dinosaur National Monument
Dinosaur
Rangley
Meeker
White River
Douglas Creek
Piceance Creek
White River National Forest
UTAH
COLORADO
40
64
139
13
R103W
R102W
R101W
R100W
R99W
R98W
R97W
R96W
R95W
R93W
R92W
R91W
R90W
Moffat County
Rio Blanco County
Garfield County
0 5 10 15 20 25
Miles
N
Land Status
BLM
National Park Service
USDA Forest Service
Colorado State
Colorado State DOW
White River Resource Area
DENVER
COLORADO